

FIRST PICTURE THAT MADE GIBSON FAMOUS

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SHE CONTEMPLATES THE CLOISTER.

BLIND MEN AS BATTLERS

ONE of the biggest railroad systems in the country is at present engaged in a battle with a club of blind men. Just how the apparently unequal contest will come out is far from clear, but enough ammunition has been fired by the small army of the blind thoroughly to surprise and disconcert the railroad. And the ammunition in the form of facts has surprised almost everybody who had come to know of the controversy, even those who thought they knew a good deal about the blind people and what they had accomplished.

The railroad is the Pennsylvania system and the blind men are the blind generally in this country and specifically a small hundred of them who compose the membership of the Blind Men's Improvement Club of New York. Public attention was first called to the matter by the blind men themselves. Little stories appearing in the daily papers told of the protest of the Blind Men's Improvement Club against the Pennsylvania railroad's ruling that no one without a guide should be allowed to ride on its trains, unless accompanied by a "sighted" person, as the blind say.

A large corporation with a hundred thousand things to attend to and a hundred thousand carefully thought out ways of attending to them apparently had no room in its usual fashion of taking care of all possibilities as they presented themselves. It hasn't become known that any special incident caused the Pennsylvania to promulgate the rule. It was just one of hundreds of logical provisions that big corporations take as a matter of course.

It could have been more surprised that the Pennsylvania officials at what happened. Twenty-four hours later the Blind Men's Club knew all about the rule and was preparing to take action. Its first action of protest, couched in the temperate language that anything of the sort should be expressed in, does not show accurately the state of mind of the members of the club. W. I. Scandlin, president of the club, called the railroad's ruling the most staggering blow ever dealt the cause of the blind. He went on to explain why this was so.

"In the first place," said Mr. Scandlin, "the blind are by this rule and by the way like it put in the helpless class. It is to strike a terrible blow to their independence and self-reliance. It is sounding the knell of every institution for blind people have been organized to accomplish for years."

One of the things in helping the blind is to get them to overcome the loss of sight and feel independent, to rely on themselves, to be able to hold up their heads in the world.

The blind are to be restricted, are to be treated by the world as defective, no amount of work in their hands will be of any use. All the money

and thought and care that have been expended to develop freedom of spirit and cheerfulness and courage among them will have been wasted."

This psychological side of the matter had not, it would seem, occurred to the authorities of the railroad when they made the ruling. But the blind men did not rest their argument on that. They asked the Pennsylvania to look up its records and find how many blind men had suffered accident in travel because of blindness. The railroad has confessed that it cannot find a record of any accident of the sort.

Then Mr. Scandlin and others associated with him in work for the blind brought up a few material arguments. Expense is perhaps the biggest of these.

"The ruling of the Pennsylvania Railroad," Mr. Scandlin explains, "will make it almost impossible for the greater number of the blind even to consider travel on its lines. In addition to hiring a guide a man will have to pay the guide's fare and pay for his food and lodging. The cost of that will be to a majority of the blind prohibitive."

"And what is a good deal more important, if the Interstate Commerce Commission upholds the railroad's ruling it is only reasonable to suppose that other lines will follow the Pennsylvania's lead."

"It should be perfectly clear that where there is any doubt of a blind man's ability to travel safely alone no chances will be taken. Is it likely that a man so handicapped who lacked full confidence in his power to get about would take a chance and attempt it? He would be cautious where a man in possession of all of his senses might not be. I think that common sense and discretion on the part of the blind themselves and those who have direct charge of them will always see to it that those who need guides shall have them."

The controversy drew attention to the Blind Men's Improvement Club, which Mr. Scandlin heads. There are not quite 100 members and they compose as lively an assembly as you could easily find anywhere. They meet twice a month. Many of them go to the meetings untended and others have guides.

The members have debates and shows of all sorts. They may be entertained by vaudeville stunts, as they were recently, when the vaudeville performer was himself a blind man. There is a useful side to their club too. It is important to secure work for the members and to help them to become skilled in their work. Consequently lecturers on industrial and other serious topics before the club get keen attention.

There is a blind women's club too, which meets twice a month and is identical in aims and character with the men's club. The women's club gives tea parties and other feminine affairs from time to time in addition to its regular club meetings, and the blind men's club is very fond of smokers.

Organized work for the blind, that done by the New York Association for the Blind, has existed in New York only five years. It started with an unreliable

list of 1,000 names of supposedly blind cases of blindness, and the association 7,000 of these. The work includes the people. Now it has listed 10,000 actual has come personally in touch with about prevention of blindness.



MODERN MADONNA, BY BOUGUEREAU.

AMERICAN STUDENTS FLEECE

IT would probably come as a shock to the many hundreds of American students who go annually to Italy to study art and music if they realized that the dominating character of that country is not so much artistic as it is commercial. They would also be surprised to discover that a large proportion of the American students are duped by crafty teachers who know very little about what they pretend to teach and accumulate considerable fortunes as a result of the ignorance of their victims.

"Many American students," said Oliver Denner Grover, the American painter, on his recent return from the artists' colony in Florence, "go to Italy because they think this country is too commercial to encourage real art. They make the mistake that so many ambitious young men in all the arts make in thinking that their own country is so busy building up its commercial supremacy that it has no time for the cultivation of its artistic side."

"These young men and women go to Italy under the impression that the cultivation of the arts is the chief occupation of the inhabitants and that business is tolerated only because it is necessary. They do not know that Italy stands now where this country stood twenty or thirty years ago."

"At that time we were still a young country and we were occupied chiefly with putting ourselves on an equal footing with the older countries of Europe. Since then our position has been assured and we are rapidly and successfully turning our attention to the pursuit of achievements in the field of art."

"Italy, on the other hand, is practically a new country. It is really only about fifty years old, and it is interested principally in commerce and building up. Hence it is as absolutely commercial a country as any in the world. It does not occupy itself very much with the old art which flourished there centuries ago. It still has the old marks of genius which characterized those who built up its artistic fame, but it is turning this genius to other things."

"For example, the Italians are regarded as one of the most musical of people and many regard Italy as the haven of musical art. Yet there is less good music in Florence, let us say, in the way of concerts and operas than in any city of its size anywhere in the civilized world. Any fair sized American city can make a better showing than Florence. America has made its money and it has succeeded in transplanting the finest musical and artistic attractions. It has drawn not only upon Italy but upon all the countries of Europe until now it presents opportunities to the young aspirant which cannot be found abroad."

"After the young student has lived in

Italy for a short time he begins to realize this and he consoles himself with the thought that he has gone there merely for the 'atmosphere.' What comprises 'atmosphere' is rather vague in his mind. In the last analysis it merely means freedom from the many distractions to be found at home. Many finished artists go there annually because they find that they can do more work, but for the ambitious beginner there are many more opportunities at home than can be found in Italy."

"In the field of music this is especially true. Not only are the opportunities in Italy limited but the young student is beset with great dangers. He goes there with only a vague idea of what he wants and he hasn't the faintest idea where to search for it. Hence he becomes an easy victim for the many enterprising but unreliable teachers that are found throughout the country. These encourage the ambitious student and delude him with false hopes only to give him up when he has been fleeced of his last dollar. One of these teachers is said to earn nearly \$20,000 a year in this way."

"Many are the tragedies resulting from misguiding the ignorant but ambitious student. Last year a woman came to Italy to cultivate what she thought and had been told was a remarkable voice. In order to prepare herself for a great career she had left her husband and placed herself in the care of one of the successful Florentine teachers. She spent what little money she could gather in the hope of a brilliant future on the operatic stage, and she was encouraged in this hope by her instructor."

"One day this woman sang for some people who know a great deal about music. They were dumfounded. Not only did she have no voice but she had no ear for music and could never rise to even mediocrity. She dropped out of sight soon after that and was never heard from."

"There are any number of cases of a similar nature. Many young men and women are spending their time and their money under such hopeless conditions. They are the prey of designing teachers. This sad condition has been spoken of in numerous consular reports and the Consuls have made many efforts to remedy the situation, but without much success."

"In the case of those who go to Italy to study painting the situation is not so bad. But there is no reason why the younger people who still have much to learn should go to Italy when there are so many good teachers in America. They might do much better by going to even Munich or Paris."

"Still there is no necessity of their going abroad. The Art Students League in New York and the Art Students Institute of Chicago are better places for the student to get his education. The only excuse for going to Italy is to become associated with one of the great masters, but such opportunities are very rare. Our own country offers rare opportunities to the young aspirant in all the arts, and the student should think twice before he decides to subject himself to the dangers to which he is exposed in a strange land."